

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Aloha Tower

Other names/site number: TMK (1) 2-1-001:013, SHPD Historic Site Number 10-63-7380, National Register of Historic Places Number 76000660

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: Aloha Tower Drive OR 103 Ala Moana Boulevard

City or town: Honolulu State: Hawaii County: Oahu

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

|                                                                              |                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <p>_____<br/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p>             | <p>_____<br/> <b>Date</b></p> |
| <p>_____<br/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p> |                               |

|                                                                                                                                |                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>                                 |                               |
| <p>_____<br/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>                                                                     | <p>_____<br/> <b>Date</b></p> |
| <p>_____<br/> <b>Title :</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></span></p> |                               |

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object



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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT – Art Deco

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS – Late Gothic Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: STUCCO

Roof: OTHER - Cement Plaster

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Aloha Tower is located on Pier 9 at Honolulu Harbor, southwest of downtown Honolulu at the original terminus of Fort Street. Built in 1926 as part of a larger harbor construction project, the ten-story tower stands 184 feet tall and is framed by historic terminal buildings at Piers 10 and 11 to the north, the Aloha Tower Marketplace to the south, the water of Honolulu Harbor to the west, and a palm tree-lined promenade to the east. Aloha Tower is an Art Deco style building and is square in plan. It is constructed of reinforced concrete covered in stucco. The tower has a prominent base with four large, arched entryways in a cruciform plan. The shaft of the tower is narrower than the base and has four identical elevations each with an upright band of windows terminating in a large clockface under a projecting 10th floor observation deck with balconies. Balustrades read "ALOHA." The roof of Aloha Tower tapers from four, stylized, stucco-covered spires to one larger, convex-curved, pointed, hipped roof of green cement plaster topped with a widow's walk and a 40-foot yardarm with rigging. There have been changes to the tower as well as surrounding buildings, but Aloha Tower retains much of its integrity of location, workmanship, and association. Alterations to the base of Aloha Tower, the replacement of windows and doors, and the construction of Aloha Tower Marketplace reduce the integrity of the building's design, materials, setting, and feeling.

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## **Narrative Description**

Aloha Tower is a ten-story building located at Honolulu Harbor, west-southwest of downtown Honolulu. The tower is on a wharf on the eastern shore of the harbor, bound on the east-northeast by Nimitz Highway and all other sides by water. The peninsular wharf is roughly in line with the grid of downtown; its northern boundary lines up with Bethel Street, and its southern boundary with Bishop Street. A portion of Fort Street, which originally crossed downtown and terminated at the entrance to Aloha Tower, was converted to a pedestrian mall in 1968. Today the area is accessed by Aloha Tower Drive, which follows the original Fort Street corridor southwest from Nimitz Highway 350 feet toward Aloha Tower before turning 90 degrees and intersecting Bishop Street. Irwin Park, located in the block between Nimitz Highway, Aloha Tower Drive and Bishop Street, provides parking for the wharf, which is limited to pedestrian access, save for a service road along the western and southern boundaries. The area was historically urban, commercial, industrial and transportation-oriented. It retains those characteristics today with greater urban density and increased downtown development.

Originally part of a U-shaped network of passenger and freight terminals, the Aloha Tower now shares the wharf with a variety of buildings and structures. The tower is set back from the street and a wide, palm tree-lined, brick promenade runs from its northeast façade to Aloha Tower Drive. The promenade wraps completely around the Aloha Tower creating a circular boundary that separates the tower from adjacent buildings and kiosks. To the north-northeast is the original terminal building for Piers 10 and 11. The two story, concrete building runs almost the entire length of the wharf's northern wall from Nimitz Highway to the midpoint of Aloha Tower's northwest façade, fronting Aloha Tower Drive and the promenade. To the south-southeast is the Aloha Tower Marketplace, a late 20<sup>th</sup> century mixed-use facility comprised of four main, two and three story, rectangular, hipped roof buildings and an assortment of smaller buildings, pavilions and kiosks in which portions have been converted to student dorms and offices for Hawai'i Pacific University.

Aloha Tower is Art Deco in style with elements of Late Gothic Revival architecture. It is square in plan and constructed of reinforced concrete covered in stucco. The tower has a prominent, three story base with four large, arched entryways arranged in a cruciform plan. The base tapers slightly from foundation to terminus and has two water tables, one low to the ground and the other just below the base's midpoint, which create a sense of balance and proportion with the rest of the tower. The base was heavily altered in 1994 as part of a redevelopment project. The southeast, southwest and northwest façades were created after removing part of the Pier 10 terminal and demolishing the Pier 9 terminal, both of which originally abutted the base of Aloha Tower on those three sides. The base elevations of Aloha Tower are nearly identical, and the differences between them indicate the tower's original form. The southeast, southwest and northwest base elevations feature a large, central, two-story projection that occupies nearly all of the façade and marks the height and setback of the original terminal buildings. Each projection is divided into three bays. The central bay features a large entryway framed by two pilasters that extend from the second water table to support a simple, expressed, round arch. Within the arch is a wide, ground level entrance with no doors, above which is a fixed glass transom with decorative metal armature topped by a recessed stucco panel with the word "ALOHA" in applied metal letters and, finally, an arched fanlight with decorative metal armature. The outer two bays are simpler, featuring only a

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single, vertically oriented, recessed, fixed glass window with decorative metal armature and an expressed, triangular arched window hood. The windows rest atop the lower water table. Above the arched entryway is an expressed belt course that wraps around a projecting balcony, which is supported by a pair of corbels at each end. The front of the balcony has a metal balustrade in the same style as the window armature. The side walls of each balcony are created by the projection's parapet wall. These balconies are accessible by doors on the third floor. They are not connected to each other and are not open to the public.

The northeast elevation faces the tree-lined promenade and is the only unique base façade. It is very similar to the other elevations with the same central, arched entryway flanked by openings above the lower water table and a projecting balcony on the third floor. The differences between this façade and the other three are subtle. As the only original façade, it does not have a projected entryway. The opening within the arch is more recessed and originally housed a set of double doors. Rather than windows in the outer bays, the northeast façade has wider openings with fixed louvers behind a decorative armature and taller, more prominent, expressed hoods. Prior to the 1994 alteration, these openings were for double doors with a transom and armature. Above the second water table and flanking the entry arch are two arched, slot windows of 12 fixed lights. The windows are replacements. Triangular window hoods wrap around the arch of each window and are incorporated into an expressed belt course. The balcony on this façade differs from the other three somewhat significantly. It projects from the façade independent of a cornice or belt course and consists of a simple plinth supported by paired corbels at each end. The balustrade is solid stucco-covered concrete with no decorative armature. The balcony is the shallowest of the four as it is not atop a larger projection. Further distinguishing this façade are two, slim, stylized truncated spires that flank the balcony, framing the lower windows of the tower's shaft and bracketing a prominent cornice that marks the terminus of the base. Original to the building, the cornice is present on all four corners of the base but does not encircle the tower, thus creating visual interest by making the windows of the third floor appear notched into the base.

The shaft of the tower is narrower than the base and emphasizes the building's verticality. The four identical elevations each have an upright, tripartite band of windows that stretches from the third to the ninth floor. The windows are vertically oriented with double awning lights set over a larger fixed light. Above each window are two, stacked, square, decorative metal panels. The pattern of one window and two panels is repeated the full length of the band until the ninth-floor windows, which have only one decorative panel above them.

Original drawings show that the windows on Aloha Tower were "steel sash and glass" with decorative armature. The armature was removed and the original windows replaced in 1957.<sup>1</sup> The three window bands are separated by two, thin strips of stucco and terminate in a beam of the same material. Above the beam, and flush with the windows, is a clockface that is 12'-6" in diameter.<sup>2</sup> The window band and clock face are framed by two pilaster strips that draw the eye upward to the tenth-floor observation deck, which is defined by an expressed belt course that wraps around a projecting balcony supported by corbels. The balustrade of each balcony is

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<sup>1</sup> "Aluminum, Glass Windows Will Go on Aloha Tower," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), Aug. 4, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Morse, "Aloha Tower clock's glass faces broken by vandal," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), Oct. 19, 1993.

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stucco-covered concrete with cutaway block letters that spell "ALOHA" and is topped with metal safety rails. Above the balcony is a wide, segmental arch that shelters a shallow, recessed porch with a single glass door that leads to the tenth floor. The door is flanked by large, fixed glass windows and has a three-part transom above. There is a decorative cornice supported by corbels above the segmental arch.

The four corners of Aloha Tower terminate in stylized, truncated spires reminiscent of those on the base's northeast elevation. The face of each spire has an arched, slot window with eight lights, the lower seven of which are awning lights. Triangular window hoods wrap around the arch of each window and are incorporated into an expressed belt course. The spires terminate in square, convex-curved, hipped roofs. At the center of the spires is the tower's main roof. It is an eight-sided, convex-curved, hipped roof of green cement plaster. Each main elevation of the roof has a single, stucco dormer with an arched, slot window and projecting, triangular window hood that creates a front gable. The roof is capped with a small, metal widow's walk and a yardarm with rigging and flags.

The only floors of the Aloha Tower open to the public are the open-air ground floor, the second floor, and the tenth-floor observation deck. Other floors are used as offices for both the Harbors Division and private businesses. The ground floor is accessed by four open entrances, one on each of the façades. Two intersecting tile walkways divide the ground floor into four sections. The northeast and southeast sections are closed and used as mechanical rooms. The southwest section is divided into three distinct parts: a glassed-in display case for educational exhibits, the elevator, and an open room with interpretive panels about Honolulu Harbor and Boat Days. The northwest section is also in three parts: two open rooms with interpretive panels and the historic, double 90° flat turn staircase that accesses only the second floor. The lower portions of walls throughout the ground floor show signs of rising damp and efflorescence. At the intersection of the two tile walkways is a decorative tile inlay of concentric circles and overlapping eight-point stars with a central medallion that reads "ALOHA TOWER 1926 – 1994." The ceiling directly above the decorative inlay is cut away to form an interior, circular balcony with a balustrade reminiscent of the building's window armature.

The second floor can be accessed by both the stairs and the elevator but is not an actively used space. The second floor is predominantly open and similar in plan to the ground floor, though there is no interpretation. Original drawings show the second floor had two, multi-stall bathrooms for arriving and departing passengers; no evidence of those bathrooms remains. The center of the room features the round balcony that looks down onto the ground floor below. The walls and ceiling of the second floor show a complex and asymmetrical support system of engaged piers and beams. A door on the southeastern wall leads to a narrow, 180° flat turn staircase that accesses the second to ninth floors. The tenth floor is only accessible to the public via the elevator due to the location of the clock mechanism between the ninth and tenth floors.

The tenth-floor observation deck was originally used as an overlook for harbor pilots and was also open to the public. There are still harbor office spaces in use on the tenth floor. The tenth floor was remodeled in 1957 and has linoleum flooring and a drop ceiling. Similar to the ground floor, the tenth floor has a door on each exterior wall with walkways intersecting in a cruciform plan, dividing the floor into four sections. In the northwest corner is a small office. A closet and bathroom occupy the northeast corner. The southeast corner has a small closet and two water fountains.

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The southwest corner provides access to the elevator. Each observation balcony is accessed by a fixed glass panel door with fixed glass windows on each side and a three-part transom above. A horizontal wooden slat screen band runs along the walls at ceiling level completely encircling the room except on the wall above the elevator doors where the historic floor indicator is located. Historic floor indicators are present on every floor of the building and are protected by plexiglass cases. In the middle of the tenth floor, running northeast to southwest, is a long narrow enclosure that limits access to the stairs leading down to the clock mechanism. The rectangular enclosure is made of a half-height wall topped with a partition of fixed glass plates in wooden frames. The enclosure does not reach the ceiling. There is a wooden door with a single, square, fixed light located at the southwest end of the enclosure. On each long side of the half-height wall is a wood slat bench similar in style to the wall-mounted screen.

Aloha Tower retains much of its original, historic integrity. The tower's location is unchanged. The integrity of setting and design were impacted by a 1994 project that resulted in the partial demolition of the Pier 10 terminal and the complete demolition of terminals at Piers 8 and 9. Piers 10 and 11 are still in danger of demolition, which would further reduce the area's integrity. The demolition left the Aloha Tower a free-standing building, which it had never been, and necessitated a significant design change to the base of the tower. Three, two-story elevations based on the design of the original northeast façade entrance were created; the rest of the tower was left unaltered. Integrity of materials and workmanship is somewhat intact. The exterior retains its stucco finish, historic clock, simple art deco design elements, and unique roof form, but the original steel windows and decorative armature were removed in 1957 and replaced with aluminum awning windows and decorative metal panels. The original fenestration pattern remains intact. Inside, several historic elements are intact, including elevator floor indicators and some interior doors. Feeling and association were both somewhat impacted by the loss of the surrounding pier terminals. However, Aloha Tower's continued use as the harbor master's lookout, its relationship to Honolulu Harbor, the proximity of the remaining terminals at Piers 10 and 11, and the tower's visibility from Ala Moana Boulevard/Nimitz Highway and Fort Street Mall communicate the original intent and use of the building.

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### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
Transportation  
Maritime History

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**Period of Significance**

ca. 1926-1959

**Significant Dates**

1926

1993-1994

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Arthur Reynolds, architect

C.W. Winstedt, National Construction Co., Ltd., contractor/builder

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Aloha Tower is of state significance under Criterion A for its association with Hawaiian maritime history and as a transportation hub for tourist activities in Hawaii from its construction in 1926 until the dominance of commercial air travel in 1959. The tower was built as part of a terminal complex at Piers 8, 9 and 10 on Honolulu Harbor when the harbor was being expanded to accommodate Hawaii's growing shipping and sea travel markets. For visitors to Oahu, the Aloha Tower was one of the first buildings visible from their ships and was the point at which they disembarked after days at sea - to be met by hula dancers, muu muu clad women selling leis, and music by the Royal Hawaiian Band.<sup>3</sup> It is of state significance under Criterion C for its unique place in Hawaii's architectural development. The Aloha Tower was the tallest building in the islands when it was constructed, and it remained so for 20 years. Inspired by the ferry building in San Francisco, the Aloha Tower is a classic example of early 20th century maritime architecture. Demolition of the pier terminals surrounding Aloha Tower and alterations to the base impact the building's integrity of setting and feeling, but the intact nature of the tower above the second story conveys the original design and use. The Aloha Tower was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. This nomination is intended as an update to the original nomination form.

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<sup>3</sup> Lynn Blocker Krantz, Nick Krantz and Mary Thiele Fobian, *To Honolulu in Five Days: Cruising Aboard Matson's S.S. Lurline* (Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 2001), 69.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A

The land on which Aloha Tower now stands was created during the first Honolulu Harbor development project that was completed in 1870. What had been mostly mudflats and beach was converted into fill land where government offices, heavy industry, and shipping-related businesses set up shop. Writer Chauncey C. Bennett wrote of the harbor project:

In the year 1857, was commenced the work of filling in the reef called Waikahalulu, seaward of the site occupied by the old Fort of Honolulu. The tract had been the property of the Queen Dowager Kalama, relict of Kamehameha III, and was purchased from her by the government for the sum of \$20,000. It now forms that valuable property known as the Esplanade, on which are the new Custom House and warehouses, and which is provided with excellent facilities for wharfage.<sup>4</sup>

The area in front of Aloha Tower, which now comprises Irwin Park and Piers 10 and 11, was then home to the customs house, a blacksmith and wagon shop, a planing mill, ice works, a boat builder and several storage sheds.<sup>5</sup> By the turn of the century, shipping had evolved from sails to steam, and Honolulu Harbor needed larger and more modern wharves to accommodate the larger ships.

Plans to modernize Honolulu Harbor came about as the City Beautiful Movement was gaining popularity in the United States and Europe around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hawaii was becoming a tourist destination and many people wanted to showcase the city of Honolulu as a beautiful vacation spot rather than an industrial stopover for whaling ships. Renowned city planner Charles Mumford Robinson was hired to design a beautification plan for Honolulu, and his design for a “gateway to the city” was first announced in 1906.<sup>6</sup> The development of Honolulu Harbor was still in the planning stage, and many details were not yet settled. Robinson wanted visitors to Honolulu to “pass through the city’s gate, getting an idea of something beautiful right at the start, instead of meeting the present rather squalid waterfront views...”<sup>7</sup>

The territorial government had recently begun a major dredging and wharf construction project to adapt Honolulu Harbor to larger industrial and passenger-based ships. As the harbor developed, it was decided that the wharf for Piers 8, 9, 10 and 11 was better suited for large passenger ships, and the ideal location for the “gateway to the city” was shifted two blocks Ewa, where Aloha Tower is now located.

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<sup>4</sup> C.C. Bennett, “Honolulu Directory and Historical Sketch of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands,” 1869, 44.

<sup>5</sup> Dakin Fire Insurance Map 1891, Honolulu Sheet No. 2.

<sup>6</sup> “Robinson’s Gateway to the City,” *The Hawaiian Gazette*, March 23, 1906, 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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The plan for a clocktower at the foot of Fort Street above the terminal complex at Piers 8, 9 and 10 of Honolulu Harbor was first made public in 1919 as part of a larger harbor modernization project.<sup>8</sup> After years of debate concerning the style and height of the tower, the Board of Harbor Commissioners began construction in 1925, and it was completed in 1926. Originally slated to be 172 feet tall, designs for the tower were changed during construction to add an additional story making the tower 184 feet tall with a 40-foot-tall flag pole and four-foot time ball on top.<sup>9</sup> The tower was to serve as a lookout for the harbor master and harbor pilots, with offices below for other Board of Harbor Commissioners activities. Unused office space was available for rent to local businesses, and the tenth-floor observation deck was free and open to visitors.

During Hawaii's time as a U.S. territory, the Board of Harbor Commissioners was responsible for shores, streams, harbors, and wharf and pier construction throughout the islands.<sup>10</sup> The board was pivotal in modernizing Honolulu Harbor, primarily through canal dredging and wharf construction, which allowed more and larger freight and passenger ships to access the harbor. Aloha Tower was a major part of the harbor improvements. In addition to its role as a lookout point for harbor pilots, the tower was outfitted with a time ball that helped mariners "in setting their time and adjusting their chronometers," as well as a siren that sounded three times a day.<sup>11</sup> Later, a naval-style yard arm with a ball and cone communication system was added to the tower. "When an orange ball and cone were both displayed, the harbor was closed. Right-of-way belonged to incoming ships when just the ball was displayed, and outgoing ships had the right-of-way when just the cone was present."<sup>12</sup> In 1926, the Honolulu Harbor light at Sand Island was retired, and a newer light was installed at the top of Aloha Tower.<sup>13</sup> The new light was more visible than the one on Sand Island and shone atop Aloha Tower until the late 1960s when it was moved to a taller television tower.<sup>14</sup>

Aloha Tower served Honolulu Harbor not only as the Harbor Master's office and official traffic control for the port, but also as a transportation hub and signal of welcome to visitors. The bright white Aloha Tower was the tallest building on the Hawaiian Islands for many years and was one of the most distinguishable man-made features of the Honolulu skyline. After five days at sea, passengers disembarked their ships at the terminal complex on Piers 8, 9, 10 and 11 with the Aloha Tower above them. From its construction in 1926 until the marked decline of passenger ship travel in the late 1950s, the Aloha Tower was the first place many visitors to Hawaii set foot.

The arrival of passenger ships at Piers 8, 9, 10 and 11 was always met with a Boat Day celebration. Originally an irregular event focused on the arrival of mail and goods from the "outside world," the Boat Days tradition was kept alive in the territorial era by Matson Navigation Company. Matson employed the Royal Hawaiian Band to play traditional Hawaiian songs while local women danced hula and sold leis to visiting guests at the foot of the Aloha Tower. Though Boat Days

<sup>8</sup> "Honolulu Harbor To Have Clock Tower," *The Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), Dec. 20, 1919.

<sup>9</sup> "Aloha Tower Will Rise One Story: 12 Feet," *The Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), Nov. 6, 1925.

<sup>10</sup> Robert McDonald and Charles Litter, *The Governance of Hawaii: A Study in Territorial Administration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1929), 153.

<sup>11</sup> "Aloha Tower Wins Favor of Business," *The Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), Oct. 4, 1924.

<sup>12</sup> "Minor Light of Oahu – Aloha Tower Lighthouse," [lighthousefriends.com](http://lighthousefriends.com), accessed June 27, 2018. <http://lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=890>.

<sup>13</sup> "New Harbor Light on Aloha Tower To Flash Tonight," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), July 1, 1926.

<sup>14</sup> "Minor Light of Oahu – Aloha Tower Lighthouse," [lighthousefriends.com](http://lighthousefriends.com), accessed June 27, 2018. <http://lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=890>.

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were designed for the enjoyment of visitors, local people also took part in the festivities. In addition to vacationing tourists, Matson's boats transported "mail, perishables, (and) essential supplies..."<sup>15</sup> As the great ships were emptied, tourists and supplies alike were shuttled across the island by car, bicycle, streetcar and train.

Only during World War II was the Aloha Tower closed to public. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Aloha Tower was commissioned by the U.S. military for use as a planning center for military convoy operations. During this time, the tower, all its windows and all four faces of the clock were painted in camouflage. Much of the vegetation from nearby Irwin Park was removed, and the whole area was fenced and patrolled by guards. Aloha Tower was returned to its pre-war condition and released from military service in December of 1945, at which time it resumed its role as Hawaii's most welcoming landmark.

For over three decades, Aloha Tower marked Hawaii's most significant point of transportation. As passenger travel evolved from five-day ship excursions to five-hour flights, boat travel to the Hawaiian Islands declined and Boat Days became less frequent. Matson Navigation Company sold its non-shipping assets in 1959, and soon Boat Days ended altogether. Aloha Tower, however, remains an active player in harbor activities and continues to function as the Harbor Master's traffic control center for Honolulu Harbor.<sup>16</sup> Visitors to the tenth-floor observation deck can watch freight and passenger ships entering the harbor and docking at various wharves, much as they would have when the tower was built.

### Criterion C

Designed by local architect Arthur Reynolds, the Aloha Tower is an early example of Art Deco architecture in the Hawaiian Islands. True to traditional Art Deco designs, the tower has smooth, light colored, stucco-clad walls; simple, stylized design elements; and a strong emphasis on verticality. The Aloha Tower deviates from a purely Art Deco design by using forms reminiscent of Late Gothic Revival architecture including arched windows; stylized, truncated spires; and a peaked roof with dormers. It also has a large clock face on each façade just below the tenth-floor observation deck.

The Aloha Tower was built as part of a multi-pier terminal complex and is constructed of reinforced concrete. The tower has been altered twice since its construction. In 1957, the original steel and glass sash windows and armature were removed and replaced with aluminum awning windows and panels. Additionally, exterior doors were replaced with aluminum versions, and interior bathrooms on floors 3 through 9 were moved from the southeast corner to the southwest wall inside the designated office areas adjoining the elevator shaft. The 1957 changes are within the period of significance and are considered historic. A minor project in 1965 saw the addition of a terminal and ramp to the fronts of Piers 9 and 10, but the project did not impact or alter the Aloha Tower and was later removed.

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<sup>15</sup> Maili Yardley, *Hawaii's Glamour Days*, (Honolulu, HI: Mutual Publishing, 1996), page 6.

<sup>16</sup> "Aloha Tower," Historic Hawaii Foundation, accessed June 1, 2018, <https://historichawaii.org/2014/02/19/aloha-tower/>.

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A second major project in 1994 led to the demolition of terminals at Piers 8 and 9 and the partial demolition of the terminal at Pier 10. This left Aloha Tower as a free-standing building for the first time, and base elevations modeled after the original northeast façade entrance were created for the first two stories of the northwest, southwest and southeast sides of the tower. Though each project had a significant effect on the original design of the building, the overall visual impact of the Aloha Tower remains virtually unchanged. It is a striking white tower with a large clockface on all four sides, and a unique, spired roof form visible from a distance both on land and water.

Funding for the terminal project was approved in 1919, but construction on the Aloha Tower did not begin until 1925. According to the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, the delay was “occasioned by a long study on architectural styles for the tower.”<sup>17</sup> Debate among local and territorial politicians, business owners and tax payers concerned the cost, use, and style of the tower. Architectural elements, such as rooftop gardens and tropical motifs, were suggested in editorials in the newspaper and at public meetings.<sup>18</sup> In the end, Arthur Reynolds’ modern design for Aloha tower was approved and construction began. Mid-construction, a second debate roiled, this time concerning the height of the tower. The original plans called for a 172-foot, 14-story tower, but as the scaffolding was put up, residents began to request a taller tower claiming that it was an “outrage against posterity” to build a tower shorter than the electric company’s chimneys with a clock set so low that only “the merchants down at Fort Street can see” it.<sup>19</sup> Public opinion was largely in favor of a taller tower, but a vocal minority argued that such a tall building would detract from the natural beauty of the landscape. Renderings were drawn and published in the newspaper showing the tower as it would look from the harbor at 172 feet tall and with three stories added, making the tower 208 feet tall.<sup>20</sup> The decision was ultimately made to add a single story to the tower, increasing its height to 184 feet. The compromise was made after “careful consideration and... advice from two leading architects in the city” who determined that adding three stories would detract from the original design, but that the addition of one story would be “100 percent perfect from an architectural standpoint.”<sup>21</sup>

Once completed, the Aloha Tower was a source of pride for most residents. It was touted as a landmark and “architectural triumph” on par with the ferry building in San Francisco.<sup>22</sup> Locals and tourists alike rode the elevator to the tenth-floor observatory to take in views of the water and land from the tallest building in Hawaii. As the Islands’ tallest building, Aloha Tower became a center for cultural and community activities. Pageants and parades on the water were choreographed to be seen from Aloha Tower. Swimming competitions, marathons and fun runs began or ended at the foot of the tower. The tower even became a unit of measure as people would compare it against the height of a volcano or length of a dock. When the drydock at Pearl Harbor was announced in June of 1940, it was reported that “forty Aloha Towers could be laid down inside

<sup>17</sup> “Aloha Tower Plans Nearing Completion,” *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), Feb. 21, 1923.

<sup>18</sup> “Hawaii Architecture,” *The Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), Oct. 18, 1925.

<sup>19</sup> “Think of The Future,” *The Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI) Sep. 30, 1925.

<sup>20</sup> C.W. Winstedt, “The Aloha Tower,” *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), Oct. 17, 1925.

<sup>21</sup> “Aloha Tower Will Rise One Story: 12 Feet,” *The Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), Nov. 6, 1925.

<sup>22</sup> “Aloha Tower is Seen As Great Pacific Symbol,” *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), May 8, 1926.

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it.”<sup>23</sup> As recently as July of 2018, the Associated Press compared the height of the volcanic spatter cone at Fissure 8 on the Big Island of Hawaii to that of the Aloha Tower.<sup>24</sup>

Honolulu’s current skyline is dominated by high rises, but before the Aloha Tower was built, the city’s tallest buildings were only five to seven stories tall. A group of citizens led by the powerful Cooke family opposed to the placement and height of the Aloha Tower “fearing it would detract from the natural beauty of the Islands by marring ship passengers’ views of the mountains.”<sup>25</sup> By focusing on the tower’s architectural beauty and maritime utility, the Board of Harbor Commissioners was able to win over most residents, and in time, many of those who originally opposed the tower came to appreciate it.

The Aloha Tower set a precedent for public acceptance of tall buildings in the Hawaiian Islands and in 1946, with very little public opposition, Tripler Army Medical Center overtook Aloha Tower as the tallest in the territory. Eventually, the post-war economic boom and Hawaii’s subsequent statehood led to the construction of mid- and high-rise buildings across Honolulu that dwarfed the Aloha Tower. “Tall buildings began to redefine Honolulu’s skyline, initially in Waikiki with the Biltmore (1955), Princess Kaiulani (1955) and Reef (1956) hotels and Rosalei Apartments (1955), then in other areas with the Ala Moana Tower (1961) at Ala Moana Center and Hawaii National Bank (1962) in the business district.”<sup>26</sup> Hawaii’s tallest building has changed numerous times since 1926, but none has held the title longer than the Aloha Tower, which still presents a unique profile due to its location.

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<sup>23</sup> “Drydock At Pearl Harbor To Be Largest In Country,” *The Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), June 17, 1940.

<sup>24</sup> “Hawaii Volcano Forms Cone About Same Height as Aloha Tower,” *usnews.com*, last modified July 2, 2018, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/hawaii/articles/2018-07-02/hawaii-volcano-forms-cone-about-same-height-as-aloha-tower>.

<sup>25</sup> Don J. Hibbard, *Buildings of Hawaii*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), page 102.

<sup>26</sup> Fung Associates, Inc., *Hawaii Modernism Context Study*, prepared for Historic Hawaii Foundation (Honolulu: 2011), 3-31.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 0.039 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 21.307064 | Longitude: -157.865999 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927    or     NAD 1983

- |            |                 |                   |
|------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 4 | Easting: 617410 | Northing: 2556920 |
| 2. Zone:   | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:   | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:   | Easting :       | Northing:         |

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the Aloha Tower consists of the building's footprint and the promenade that traces the old Fort Street corridor but excludes the surrounding hardscape features and landscaping.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries were selected because they contain the original entrance façade of the tower and the three base elevations created in 1994. The promenade leading northeast from the tower is included because it traces the old Fort Street corridor that originally allowed pedestrian and motor vehicle access to the Aloha Tower entrance. Surrounding landscapes and hardscapes are not included because they are not original to Aloha Tower's period of significance.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Lindsey Walsworth  
organization: Mason Architects, Inc.  
street & number: 119 Merchant Street, Suite 501  
city or town: Honolulu state: Hawaii zip code: 96813  
e-mail lew@masonarch.com  
telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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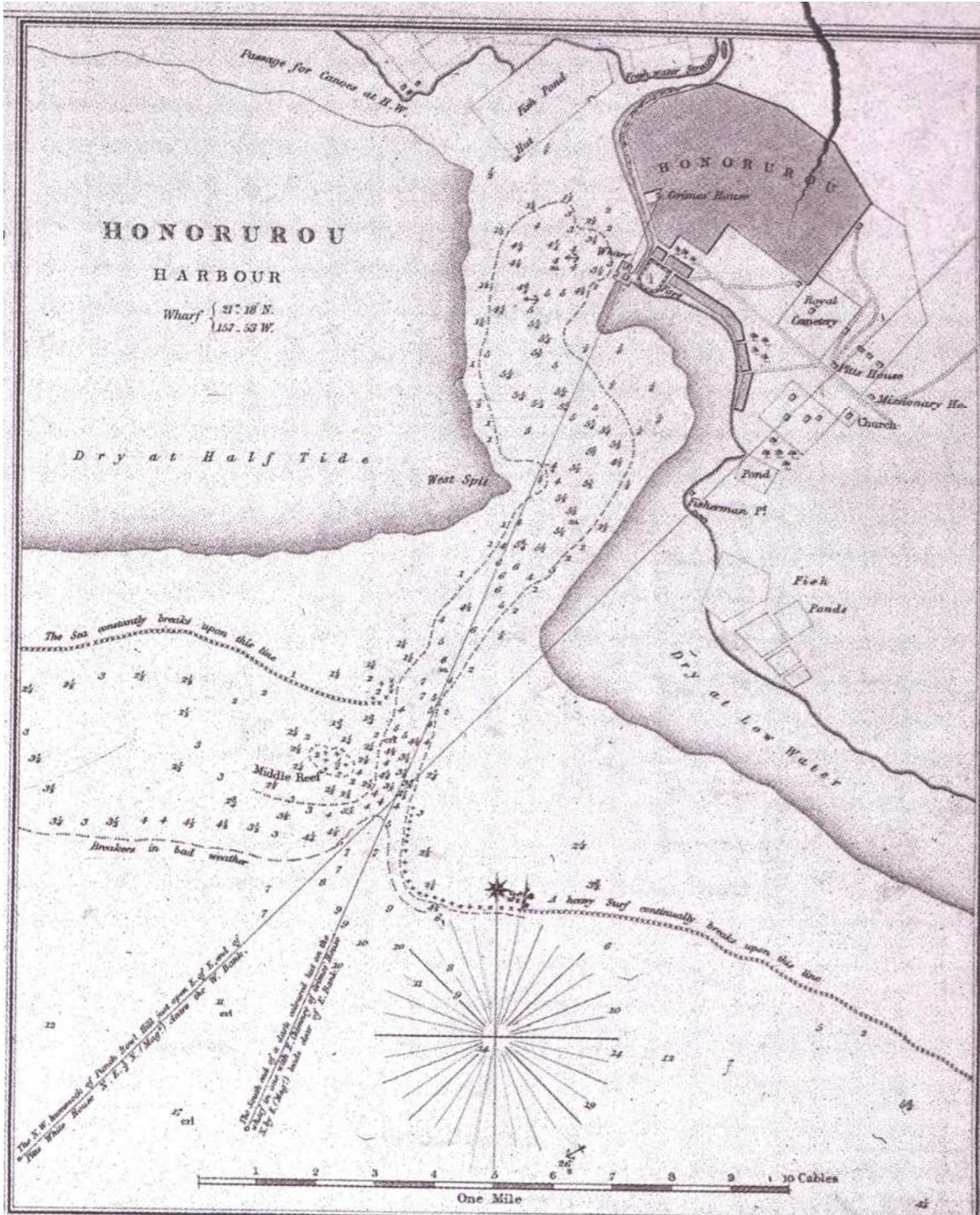
Figure 1. USGS Honolulu Quadrangle. Hawaii-Honolulu Co. 7.5-Minute Series 2013 (arrow added)



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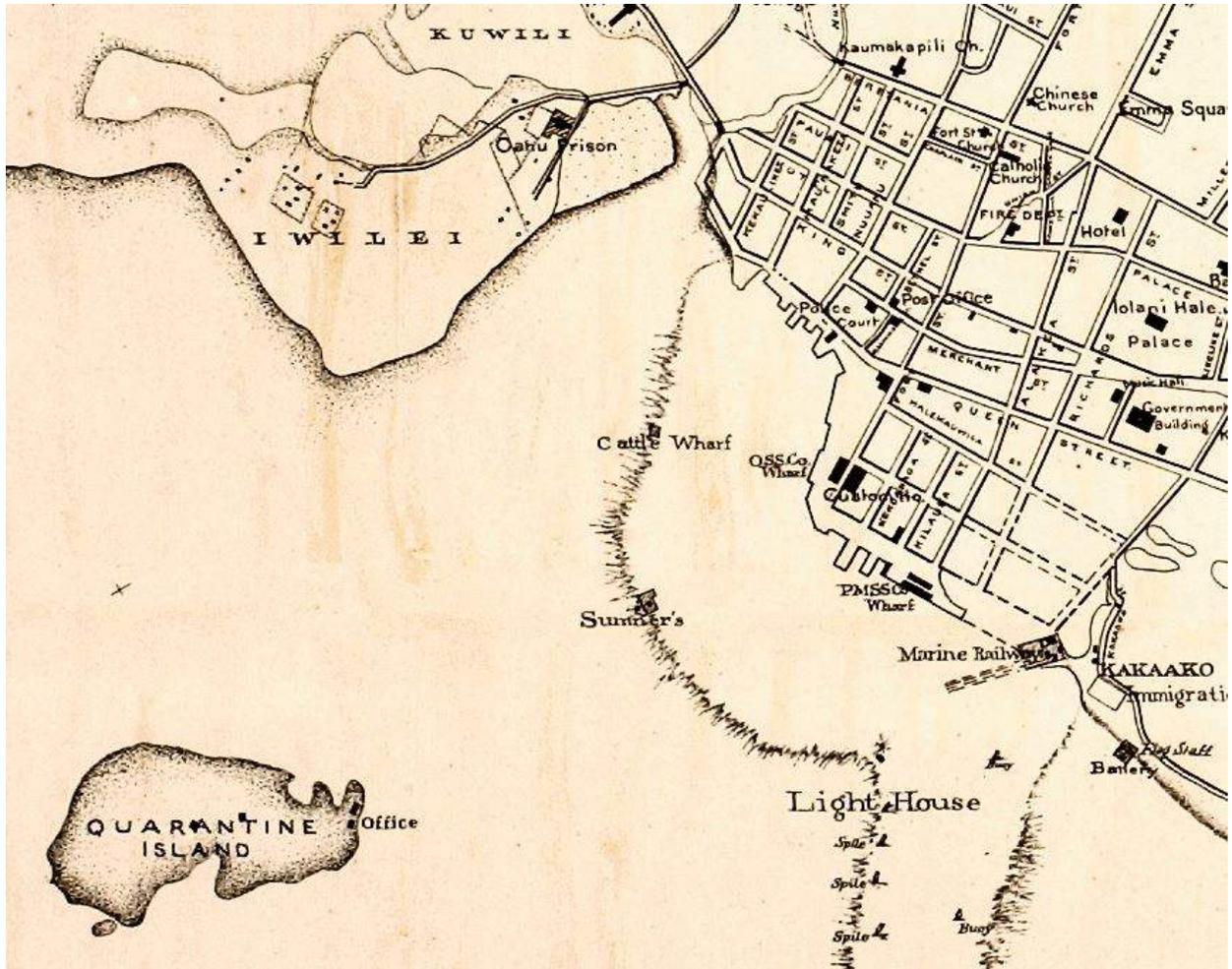
Malden 1825 Map of Honorourou showing the Russian Fort and the land that now comprises the shoreline as "Dry at Low Water."



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Crop of Honolulu and Vicinity Map 1887 by W.A. Wall showing Sand Island as Quarantine Island and layout of mud flats that would be built upon to extend the shoreline for Piers 8-11.





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Figure 2. Honolulu Harbor December 25, 1927. Photo courtesy of Hawaii Aviation, Hawaii Department of Transportation Archives



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Figure 3. Aloha Tower ca. 1927, Photos courtesy of the Hawaii State Archives



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Figure 4. Looking Southwest along Fort Street to Aloha Tower in the 1930s. Photo courtesy of the National Archives, accessed through PBS.org, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/island-murder-1930s-honolulu/>



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Figure 5. Aerial photo ca. 1958, Photo courtesy of the Historic Hawaii Foundation



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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property: Aloha Tower

City or Vicinity: Honolulu

County: City and County of Honolulu

State: Hawaii

Photographer: Lindsey Walsworth

Date Photographed: July 5, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 10. Northeast façade and old Fort Street corridor - Camera facing southwest

Photo 2 of 10. Northeast façade, base detail - Camera facing southwest

Photo 3 of 10. Northwest façade, base detail – Camera facing southeast

Photo 4 of 10. Southwest façade – Camera facing northeast

Photo 5 of 10. Southeast façade, base detail – Camera facing northwest

Photo 6 of 10. Southern quadrant of ground floor interior, interpretation room and evidence of ground level efflorescence – Camera facing southeast

Photo 7 of 10. Western quadrant of ground floor interior, staircase to second level – Camera facing west-northwest

Photo 8 of 10. Second floor interior showing circular balcony – Camera facing northeast

Photo 9 of 10. Tenth floor observation deck interior, elevator detail – Camera facing southwest

Photo 10 of 10. Tenth floor observation deck interior – Camera facing north-northeast

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Photo 1 of 10. Northeast façade and old Fort Street corridor - Camera facing southwest



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Photo 2 of 10. Northeast façade, base detail - Camera facing southwest



Aloha Tower  
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Photo 3 of 10. Northwest façade, base detail – Camera facing southeast



Aloha Tower  
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Photo 4 of 10. Southwest façade – Camera facing northeast



Aloha Tower  
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Photo 5 of 10. Southeast façade, base detail – Camera facing northwest



Aloha Tower  
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Photo 6 of 10. Southern quadrant of ground floor interior, interpretation room and evidence of ground level efflorescence – Camera facing southeast



Aloha Tower  
Name of Property

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County and State

Photo 7 of 10. Western quadrant of ground floor interior, staircase to second level – Camera facing west-northwest



Aloha Tower  
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Photo 8 of 10. Second floor interior showing circular balcony – Camera facing northeast



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Photo 9 of 10. Tenth floor observation deck interior, elevator detail – Camera facing southwest



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Photo 10 of 10. Tenth floor observation deck interior – Camera facing north-northeast



**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.